

From Kathy Underwood Director of Lifespan Faith Formation

As I write this, I am still on a high from the wonderful youth-led worship service this past Sunday! They shared their experiences and knowledge about neurodiversity and asked us to consider some simple adaptations to accommodate those with these needs. If you haven't watched it yet, you can do so [here](#). And if you have any thoughts about their proposal, feel free to let me know.

As the church year comes to a close, we have much to celebrate. On May 14, our worship service will be filled with celebrating milestones for our young people and the influential adults in their lives. We will begin with our child dedication ceremony, where children of any age are welcomed into our community and we make this promise:

We promise to care for these children.

We will help raise them to love justice and live with compassion.

We will extend to them kindness and courage.

And we will encourage them to live their dreams.

We will then recognize the youth for completing the Our Whole Lives Sexuality Education program, affectionately known as OWL. This was a huge commitment from our youth and the adult facilitators, who gathered for seven weekends during the year. We joined with First Unitarian and Second Unitarian Churches in Chicago, and had 20 youth and 7 facilitators participate, with six of the youth coming from UCE: Margot Brooks Audenaerd, Felix Gamble, Beverly Thompson-Hay, Mary McDonald, Izzy Presto, and Jay Yoo. And we couldn't have done it without our awesome OWL facilitator, Dana Deane. My hope is to offer OWL programs for younger ages next year, and in the future, to offer adult OWL programs as well. Yes, there is much to discover even as adults!

Lastly, we will honor our senior high graduates, Beverly Thompson-Hay and Rex Wallin in a UU tradition known as the Bridging Ceremony, when our youth "bridge over" into young adulthood. It is a time of mixed emotions, especially for parents and families. It is a time to send these emerging adults onto the next phase of life, whether that is college near or far, a gap year, or working towards a career. It is a time, not to say "good-bye", but to say, "let's stay in touch until you return again". Our challenge, as a community, is to do exactly that.

I hope you join us in person or online as we celebrate these milestones!

In Faith,

Kathy